DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 458 597 CS 217 714

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TITLE Live from the Writing Center: Technological Demands and Multiliterate Practice in a Virtual Writing Center.
PUB DATE 2001-03-31
NOTE 118p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Northeast Writing Centers Association (17th, Worcester, MA, March 31, 2001).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Computer Mediated Communication; Course Descriptions; Higher Education; *Student Needs; *Writing Assignments; *Writing Laboratories
IDENTIFIERS *Computer Assisted Writing; *Online Courses; Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute NY; Tutorial Mode

ABSTRACT

"Online Writing Tutorial" (OWI) was designed and piloted in the summer of 2000 as a one to two credit writing course intended for Rensselaer Polytechnic students on co-op assignment in New York and across the country. Similar to its ancestor course, "Writing Workshop" (WW), which was a one-credit course designed to fit the specific writing needs of the students who enrolled, OWT is built around the writing needs of the students. Writing assignments for students on co-op assignment range from commonplace business writing like letters, reports, and e-mails to more specific pieces like "design-reviews" and "competency reports." Upon determining a major writing project that will serve as the final project for the course, the student and instructor design a curriculum that leads to the completion of the major writing project. As closely as possible, other course activities and assignments are scheduled to mimic actual workplace deadlines. All contact for the course is online, through some computer-mediated means or another. This paper presents an overview of the curricular and technological successes and failures of the Writing Center's first real-time, distance writing course, Online Writing Tutorial. Appended is the course syllabus and copies of slides used to present the paper at the conference. (NKA)

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Live from the Writing Center: Technological Demands and Multiliterate Practice in a Virtual Writing Center

Jason Swarts

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Northeast Writing Centers Association (17th, Worcester, MA, March 31, 2001).

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Live From the Writing Center

Jason Swarts
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Introduction

Online Writing Tutorial (OWT) was designed and piloted in Summer 2000 as a 1-2 credit writing course intended for students on co-op assignment in New York and across the country.

Similar to its ancestor course, *Writing Workshop (WW),* which was a 1 credit course designed to fit the specific writing needs of the students who enrolled, *OWT* is built around writing needs of the students. Since the course is reserved for students on co-op assignment, the work of the course is the same as that which student produces on co-op. Often, these writing assignments are different from typical classroom essays; they are hybrid genres that have developed to meet specific work-related needs.

The writing assignments range from commonplace business writing like letters, reports, and emails to more specific pieces like "design-reviews" and "competency reports." Upon determining a major writing project that will serve as the final project for the course, the student and instructor design a curriculum that leads to the completion of that major writing project. Most co-op students finish their co-ops with a major writing project and presentation. As closely as possible, other course activities and assignments are scheduled to mimic actual workplace deadlines.

All contact for the course is online, through some computer mediated means or another. Since many students at Rensselaer do co-ops at remote sites, it is much more feasible for instruction to take place in an online medium. The computer mediated means of communication should, however, be able to support document sharing, as well as

synchronous and asynchronous communication so that drafts of writing may be readily exchanged and discussed. The following is an overview of the curricular and technological successes and failures of the Writing Center's first real-time, distance writing course.

Successes

Generally, *OWT* was a success. Both students stated that they found the course to be very informative and useful, and that the instruction came right when they needed it most – at work. Both students remarked that although the work they were expected to do continually changed, my underlying instructional focus on developing interpretive heuristics for understanding the changing requirements of writing at work were very helpful. Very often, by talking about ways to analyze workplace writing we operationalized rules for creating those pieces. My own observations of the course have revealed other specific successes.

Speed of Feedback

We conducted *OWT* partly through synchronous and partly through asynchronous means, and the students quickly found that this communicative arrangement allowed them to get help very rapidly. As writing problems arose, students were able to either contact the instructor via AOL Instant Messenger (receiving help within minutes) or through email (receiving help within hours). Many writing problems that the students encountered needed immediate resolution, hence the need for instantaneous feedback. Yet, while we had the ability to provide instantaneous feedback, often the technology couldn't support it (i.e. slow email, and company firewalls).

Help at the Moment of Need

Another success of the course was that because many of the class sessions and supplementary help sessions happened during work hours, the students could get help on their writing as they were doing it. Though this kind of contact was always a possibility, often the students did much of their writing at home. Further, because this work was done after-hours, they did not always have access to the company resources that they might otherwise have had.

When the students were able to get the writing help when they needed it, they had access to many resources (including people and other documents) that they could easily draw upon to supplement the writing instruction and make it more directly relevant to their specific work situations. Both students would read my comments, pull up an example of that kind of work, and ask very specific questions that related the instructional principles to their specific writing tasks.

One on One Help

Another success of *OWT* is a carry-over from *WW*. Each student received extensive one-on-one help from an experienced writing instructor. The difference, though, between *OWT* and *WW*, is that *OWT*'s curriculum was determined by a writing situation that was completely unfamiliar to the writing instructor. Even when instructors are working with students from different disciplines in the writing center, the school work that most students did in their classes were at least partly familiar in as far as those assignments bore some resemblance to common academic genres.

The end result for *OWT* was that instead of recreating a typical instructor/student relationship that exists even in the most "equal" of peer tutoring scenarios (Trimbur, 1985), *OWT* seemed more genuinely cooperative. I was trying to make sense out of the

writing situation by using the students' experience to articulate particular strategies for accomplishing the work.

Failures

OWT was generally successful; however, there are some failures to understand, some of which are technical, some of which are logistical. Some of the problems can be alleviated in later versions of the course and others will not be so easily resolved.

Ever-changing Work Environment

What I found to be true for the students was that the work planned at the beginning of course changed dramatically by the end of the course. Luckily, we were able to adjust the goals of the course so that emerging projects were folded into the existing base curriculum, which was founded on the examination of workplace writing genres and the operationalization of writing strategies for those genres. This changing work situation could potentially be a problem if at the end of the course, the final project changes or drops out completely. I think that the schedules and syllabi that we set up for this course need to be flexible and more accommodating of changes in the workplace. If our goal in *OWT* is to help students with the writing that they are actually doing, then it would seem contrary to the spirit of the class to keep the writing assignments the same and not change them as the student's work changes.

Proprietary Issues

Another problem concerns the work that students produce on the job. Much of the work that both students in the pilot section did was proprietary, meaning that I was not

allowed to see it until it was cleared by a supervisor. Depending on how the course is set up, this could be a problem.

If the student's supervisors are aware of the course then the supervisor can clear material for the course. However, if the supervisor does not agree to allow the instructor access to certain information, then it might mean that the student would have two different copies of their writing (one for internal use and one for class use).

Student Work Schedules

Work schedules, too, tended to be problematic. As mentioned above, much of the synchronous and asynchronous instruction was purposely scheduled into a regular workday so that the writing instruction would be carried out within a relevant and real writing situation. The trouble is that a co-op student's work schedule is hardly consistent. Crises came up regularly and *OWT* had to take a back seat in many instances. As a result, there were many missed meetings that needed to be rescheduled at times that would fit both the instructor's and the student's schedule.

Time Spent Communicating

A last problem that was technological was the amount of time that an *OWT* session takes. To put this information in perspective, researchers have recently speculated that communicating with text in a computer-mediated environment can take up to 8 times as long as similar communication in face to face (Walther & Tidwell, 2000.). This speculation was certainly evidenced in *OWT* where sessions regularly ran over by 30 minutes or more. It simply takes far longer to type than to say what needs to be said. This shortcoming of the medium, while not seriously detrimental the outcomes of the course, could have serious implications should online tutoring become the norm in the Writing Center.

Technology - Problems

Some of the curricular problems noted above developed from limitations built into the computer-mediated means at our disposal. For this reason I would like to begin with an examination of problematic aspects of the technology before touching on the technological solutions that we devised to work around the problems.

Firewalls

This is potentially a very serious technological problem. Both companies where the two students worked had extensive firewall protection that prevented them from downloading or using any software that enabled synchronous chat. This problem must be addressed at the corporate site as no software that the Writing Center has surveyed has provides an easy way around this problem. Most firewall problems can be solved, but we may want to make it a stipulation of taking the course that some form of synchronous communication (i.e. AOL Instant Messenger, Telnet, or NetMeeting) be available and accessible.

Email

Another problem related to the strength of company firewalls was the apparently sluggishness of email communication. Although email does not seem like it would be a problem, when it comes to document sharing, email can raise some logistic and pedagogical concerns. To the point, email is much slower than we typically believe it is. It is not an instantaneous medium of exchange and in a class session where the speed of conversation is already hampered by the amount of typing required, email delays slow down class. I believe that the company firewall slowed emails down when receiving emails from an outside server and when sending emails to any location outside of the company server..

Another problem with email is more pedagogical. While most computers now have email capability, few email programs support any annotation features that would allow an instructor to "comment" on a piece of writing as opposed to "change" a piece of writing. Email affords reading a message or changing it altogether. In order to suggest a change it is far easier for the instructor to simply make the change, a practice that is contrary to most accepted paradigms of responding to student writing.

Instant Messenger

Instant Messenger was a very convenient tool to use for *OWT*, though we were able to use it only inconsistently, given the technological and scheduling problems noted above. AOL's Instant Messenger allowed easy storage of the student's screen names, file sharing (via email), and it had a save and print feature that enabled students and the instructor to save session transcripts for future reference. Though the technology worked well, it stifled collaboration because there was no medium for application sharing. This problem is similar to email as noted above. In the absence of a shared physical space, I could not share the student's text, suggest changes by pointing to a section of the document. The best we could manage was to paste in sections of a text into the chat window. However, even under these conditions I still had to suggest changes either by making them outright or by going through the laborious process of articulating what needed to be done where without being able to point to the text.

Static Medium

Another problem was that the document sharing that was supported in the available technologies did not support collaboration or real time revision that was participatory in any great sense. The medium that we chose to use to convey revisions and revision suggestions was an attached *MS Word* documents marked up using Microsoft's

Reviewing Tools. At least with this technology the instructor can insert comments without altering the appearance of the text. *Word's* reviewing tools are very useful, and even though they are not participatory, nor are they especially intuitive to use.

Technology – Solutions

Conference Phone

Using the conference phone as a means to supplement an instructional setting with an audio channel has proven to be of great help. Once in place, the conference phone made synchronous sessions far better as it was much easier to 1) convey information 2) clarify any misunderstandings and 3) focus attention on the screen to actual revisions, keeping an auditory channel open to listen to explanations of those revisions. I believe the use of the conference phone vastly decreased the amount of time necessary to convey information to students.

NetMeeting

Initially, the technology of choice in planning for *OWT* was *Microsoft's NetMeeting*, which comes pre-installed on many *Window's* operating systems. Selecting NetMeeting for use in *OWT* and later in a Virtual Writing Center seemed a natural fit since the program would likely be available on the student's laptops. The only problem is that in order to host a meeting, the person initiating the meeting session must have a static IP address. The instructors who use it would need to conduct their classes from the Writing Center or some other location where a static IP address is available.

Another option for using *NetMeeting* is that *Microsoft* has at least 4 different locations on the web that will host *NetMeeting* sessions, and so the problem of static IP addresses might be easily solved.

The advantages to using *NetMeeting* would be:

- Audio channels to supplement typed conversation
- Document sharing– remote users can share applications on the host computer (enabling participatory revision)
- Whiteboard – remote users can use a whiteboard to sketch ideas

Telnet

One technology used out of necessity over the summer session was the "talk" feature in a standard Telnet connection. The "talk" function calls up a split screen that links together two people in a real-time conversation. This technology enabled both students to participate from work through the firewalls that prevented the use of other technology. The only trouble was that the "talk" function only allowed conversation - no document sharing. Worse, using some common Telnet software, there is no backspace function – disallowing conversants from editing even their own conversation.

The main benefit of Telnet is that it is quick, it gets through firewall protection, and the client software needed to run it is freely distributed on the Internet.

Camtasia

Camtasia is a freely distributed shareware program that allows the user to make highly compressed .avi videos of activity on their computer screen. This technology is particularly useful for students and instructors alike who run into writing problems that are difficult to articulate, but are easy to demonstrate. I ask students to make screen capture videos of writing problems that they encounter. I go through the same process, recording difficult to explain concepts in my own writing. These videos are zipped and distributed on a course website.

One of the problems with distance education and with the distance tutoring proposed for the *Virtual Writing Center* is that when tutors and students are not in the same room, with their conversation mediated by a text that they can both see and write on, it is very difficult to explain a concept or revision. These videos will help to alleviate that problem by capturing problematic moments in writing and making them available as common artifacts.

Recommendations

In the future, I think that *OWT* could benefit from a few specific changes.

- Establish a NetMeeting Conference as the site of all classroom exchanges so that any course materials are held in one central location
- Establish audio contact with the student to facilitate conversational exchanges.
- Make a web site that contains all class material.
- Provide some technology that allows students to "preserve" their writing problems as they happen.

Training

OWT is a teaching experience unlike others. There are many pitfalls to teaching writing online, and while many of them are technological, others are pedagogical. In short, students who contact the Writing Center or their instructors are often doing so from within a context where that writing help is most needed.

Typical writing classes take place in the context of a classroom, where the motivations for writing are somewhat contrived. The writing that students do in a writing classroom is built up around a vision of what the appropriate context for that writing might look

like. In distance education, as in *OWT*, the context for writing is very real, and the students taking the course are writing in that context. This new relationship between the instructor (the person with writing expertise) and the student (the person most familiar with the context for writing) is particularly disorienting at first because in most sessions there is very little instruction going on – as we typically recognize it.

Following this initial acclimation period, tutors can then get into the basics of *OWT*. Training should begin by learning the technology. Tutors should participate in an *OWT* course as an outside participant in order to get a feel for the kind of participatory dynamic that is likely to develop between student and teacher. Tutors should also become familiar with the various co-op requirements that students must meet in terms of progress reports and presentations. Another ideal training would be to handle some online tutoring sessions with students that connect from across campus or across the state.

References

Trimbur, J. (1985) Peer tutoring: A contradiction in terms? *The Writing Center Journal*, *5.2/6.1*, 35-39.

Walther, J.B, & Tidwell, L.C. (2000, July). Getting to know one another a bit at time: Computer-mediated communication effects on disclosure, impressions, and interpersonal evaluations." Paper presented at the meeting of the ***7th International Conference on Language and Social Psychology***, Cardiff, Wales.

Appendix A – Course Syllabus

Online Writing Tutorial

Rensselaer Writing Center RPIwrite/swartj@rpi.edu Summer III 2000

Rationale

The object of this class is one of our own devising. Much like its ancestor, *Writing Workshop*, our class will begin with a joint meeting to establish a working syllabus that draws primarily from work that you will be expected to do on your co-op assignment. Based on that work, we will design a systematic approach to understanding and practicing those genres, using real work situations as our motivation for completing them. We will be using actual content from your co-op and following actual deadlines from your co-op. If this means that we have to meet at irregular times to help you meet deadlines, I'm ready for it. I look forward to our work together.

Online Component

Naturally, since we cannot be in the same place every week for the duration of this class, we will be meeting primarily, if not exclusively, online in some synchronous environment. I require this for a couple of different reasons. First, when we only have email, the work that we do will seem very impersonal, and I won't be sensitive to the kinds perceptions that you have of your work and my response to it. This simple notion is that behind normal face-to-face tutoring. At least in some real-time conversation technology we will be able to reproduce it.

We will meet one hour a week (in multiple chunks, if you wish) for every credit hour that you register for (i.e. 1 credit hour = 1 hr / 2 credit hours = 2 hrs). However, I don't want you to think that this is your only contact. You can contact me any time by email to arrange for a synchronous exchange.

See the links to the required technologies on the main page of the course homepage. Also, if you want to suggest a different technology that I could get easy access to, suggest it to me.

Attendance

I don't need to remind you that this is a real class. As such, your attendance is required as it would be in any other class. Of course, we can't anticipate constraints on your schedule created by your job, so consider this agreement a flexible one that can be altered as necessary. So, if you find that you are not able to meet online for the required number of hours in a week, we can carry over remainders to less busy weeks. Please sign an attendance agreement for the Writing Center's records (download).

Grading

Grading is a curious aspect of a course like *Online Writing Tutorial* because it is based on your work and is driven by your motivation to complete that work. As you might suspect, people traditionally do very well in this course. I assure you that if you at least complete the assignments we agree to that you will get at least a "B" in the course.

Portfolio

One option that we are leaving open to other students is that they can register for *Online Writing Tutorial* in the fall and receive credit for work that they do over the summer. What this entails is that students complete a project or two in the fall to justify a fall registration. One of the projects is a portfolio of work done on the job (or variations thereof) to use later for gaining employment. This will be accompanied by a resume that works hard to integrate an articulation of the co-op experience. This project is, I have found, very useful for people thinking about applying for a job in the near future, and in some cases I may recommend this project for students in the summer session of the course.

In order to complete the project you may need to find out more about the proprietary rights held by your company to the work that you produce for them.

Combine this course with another writing center course in the Fall.

NEWCA 2001

Live from the Writing Center:

Technological Demands and Multiliterate Practice in a Virtual Writing Center

Jason Swarts

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

17

Outline

- Multiliteracy and Writing Centers
- Writing at work
- *Online Writing Tutorial*
- Establishing a Virtual Presence
  - bureaucratic issues
  - administrative issues
  - textual issues
- Technologies
  - Problems
  - Solutions

Multiliteracy and Writing Centers

- Literacy becoming redefined as "multiliteracy"
  - multimodal activity
  - oral, written and visual communication interact
- Writing is about product as much as process
- New digital literacies will shape writing center work

Trimbur, J. (Spring/Summer 2000). Multiliteracies, social futures, and writing centers. *The Writing Center Journal, 20*(2), 29-31.

Multiliteracy and Writing Centers

- Think of work beyond "service orientation"
  - more than just service for single classes
  - more than just about writing processes
- Extend our work into the community
- Re-examine our roles as cooperative agents in workplace writing situations

Trimbur, J. (Spring/Summer 2000). Multiliteracies, social futures, and writing centers. *The Writing Center Journal, 20*(2), 29-31.

Multiliteracy and Writing Centers

- Observe writing in other communities
- Characterize the literate modalities
- Identify tools
- Evaluate means of reaching those communities
- Improve those means

Instructional Context

Cooperative Education Program (Co-op)

- Paid internships (1semester +1 summer)
- Remote locations (national sponsors)
- Emphasis on practical training
  - assigned to project teams
  - involved in design
  - involved in writing and presenting

Instructional Context

- Up to 700 students on co-op annually
- % of writing in a typical week
  - 31% in 1990
  - 33% in 1995
- Writing requirements at RPI: None
- Biggest concern of past graduates: Not enough writing instruction

Instructional Context

- Co-op students must be effective communicators
  - business communication
  - technical reports
  - technical presentations
- High writing expectations
  - Skill with writing is expected
  - Skill with technical writing/editing is expected

Writing at Work

Turn work into data

- Manipulation of materials becomes "data"
- To become "data" the work must be textualized
- Audiences require different modal expression
  - Visual
  - Oral
  - Textual

Winsor, D.A. (1998). Rhetorical practices in technical work. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 12*, 343-370.

Writing at Work

Delivery matters

- Communicative medium affects text use
  - Formal reports and presentations do not invite interaction
  - Sketches, data, pictures, etc. invite more interaction
- Timing of documents matters
  - "just-in-time" documentation helps workflow
  - Format of texts must be suited to situational demands

Henderson, K. (1991). Flexible sketches and inflexible data bases: Visual communication, conscription devices, and boundary objects in design engineering." *Science, technology,& human*

Writing at Work

Readers make a difference

- Readers "satisfice"
  - Document design influences how much attention a person will give to reading
  - Audiences read to find what they need
- Readers use texts as tools
  - A text should anticipate what the reader will need
  - Texts must make that information easy to locate and understand

Redish, J.C. (1993). Understanding readers. In C.M. Barnum & S. Carliner (Eds.) *Techniques for technical communicators.* New York: MacMillan. 14 - 41.

Writing at Work

Writing is time-constrained

- Writers "satisfice" - making do with available resources
- Writing needs change with the ebb and flow of work
  - deadlines change
  - contents change
  - audiences change

Writing at Work

Workplace writing is specialized

- Writing is shaped by the character of the organization
- Writing is tacitly influenced by situational factors
  - previous documents
  - reader expectations
  - understanding of how a text is used
- To outsiders, this influence is difficult to understand

Writing at Work

Writing is a distributed activity

- Writers depend on feedback and interaction with other, more acculturated writers
- This social interaction "acculturates"
- Writers depend on available tools
  - to shape writing
  - to provide necessary perspective on info

Winsor, D.A. (2001). Learning to do knowledge work in systems of distributed cognition. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 15* (1), 5-28.

Establishing a Virtual Presence

Students

- Students are "full-time" employees
- Tuition for class must come "out of pocket"
- A course is another committment

Instructor

- Dealing with proprietary information
- Greatest student need in summer (low staff)
- Incompatible school and corporate schedules

Establishing a Virtual Presence

Administrative Demands

- Instructor must be available at a moment's notice
- Instructor must have technological capacity for working at a distance

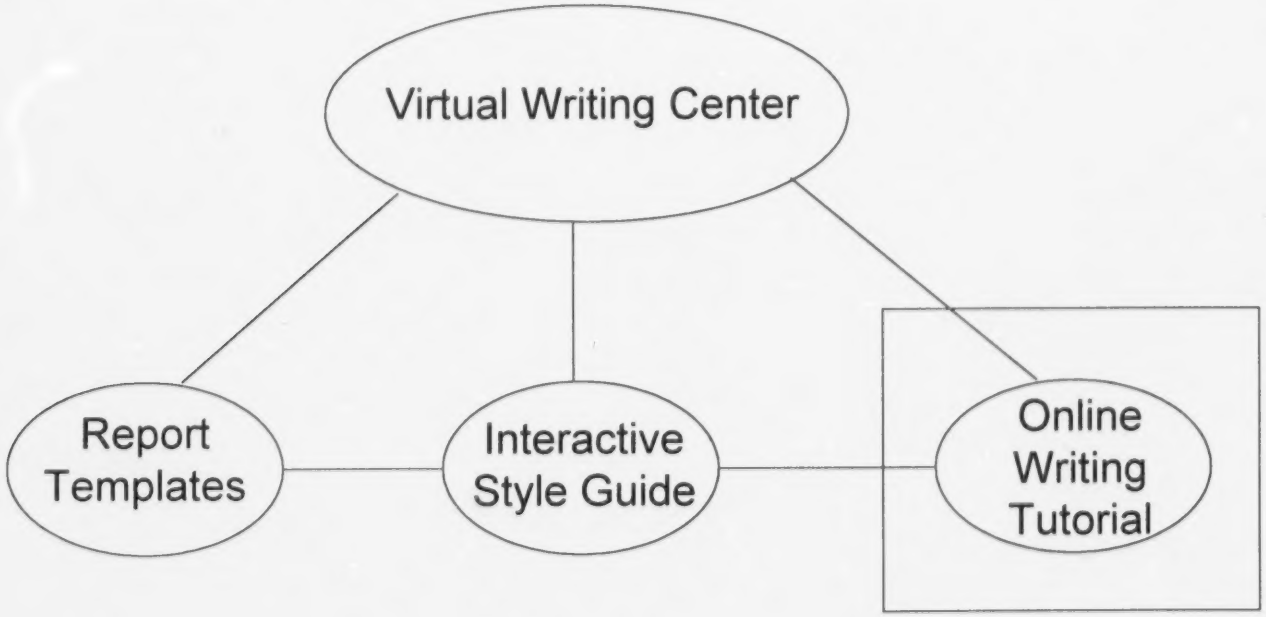
Establishing a Virtual Presence

Textual Demands

- Exchange should be multimodal
- Exchange should be synchronous
- Exchange should enable multiple perspectives on a document
- Exchange should approximate "over-the-shoulder," collaborative assistance
- Exchange should enable tool sharing

Online Writing Tutorial

- Support from Dean of Undergraduate Studies
- Part of a suite of resources



Online Writing Tutorial

- Provide "just-in-time" assistance
- Piloted in Summer 2000
- 2 students enrolled
  - Janice (Warner Lambert (CT))
  - Gary (GE Medical Systems (WI))

Online Writing Tutorial

Projects

- Those required at work
- Preparatory instructional material

√ Design Reports
√ Progress Reports
√ Final Reports
√ Technical Presentations
√ Writing exercises
√ Style exercises
√ Readings
√ Sample writing and revising

Online Writing Tutorial

Timing

- Deadlines were driven by work schedule
- Class times driven by work schedule

Student/Teacher Relationship

- Cooperative - writing for a 3rd party
- Expertise sharing - writing and content

Online Writing Tutorial

Janice

- Help with writing a design review
- Help with presentation on a new razor design
- Tips for writing clearly and effectively for a business audience
- Tips for technical editing

Work Schedule – Janice

Week	Online Agenda	Homework
1	Studying Sample Writing / Establish Hazard Lists / Discuss Writing Genres: Reviews, Reports, Business Writing	Bring in Sample Writing
2	Discussion of Homework / Begin building a Design Review	Write a Genre Template for a Design Review / Business Writing Samples
3	Discuss Design Review Draft / Tech Writing Conventions	Draft of Design Review / Read materials on Tech Writing Conventions
4	Business Writing Style – Concision & Clarity / Exercises / Resumes & Cover Letters	Final Draft of Design Review*
5	Writing Reports (Long & Short) / Making Presentations / Using Power Point	Genre Template for Final Report
6	Presentation / Critique and Discussion (I'll bring you in through conference phone for audio and to give you an actual audience)	Presentation* / Slides*
7	Wrap-up / Course Evaluation / Resume / Cover Letter	Resume* / Cover Letter*

*Please provide me with a written copy of these materials via email, 24 hours in advance of our meeting.
* Items in red are available for download

Technology

"As long as we think we do not have enough expertise to engage in substantive discussions about technology, we are effectively prevented from having an impact on the directions it may take" (13).

Nardi, B. A.& O'Day, V. L. (1999). *Information ecologies: Using technology with heart.* Cambridge, MA: MIT.

Email

From: To: Jason Swarts
Subject: classwork with the attachment this time Cc:

Jason,

I wanted To apologize for missing class again today. I received a call earlier in the day for a summer internship opportunity with PaineWebber. The secretary wanted to schedule a phone interview and said that 4:30 today was the only time that her boss had left in his schedule. It was only to last for 15 minutes and I figured that I would come to class directly after. I did not get a call until after 5pm however, and I was on the phone interviewing until 5:30. I didn't know what to do, so I am attaching my review of the mousetrap project that I was suppose to have done for today. I realize that it is too late for the group to do anything with it, but I figured that I would show you the work anyway.

Thank you for understanding,

[redacted]

ps. Sorry i couldn't send this out any earlier, I was having problems with my [redacted]

Email Attachment

Email

Used to

- Coordinate schedules
- Transfer texts and homework
- Contact each other asynchronously (i.e. overnight)
- Supplement other technologies as a delivery medium

Email

Administrative Demands

- Pro
  - Technology well suited to information exchange
  - Most accounts have high capacity for large files
- Con
  - No easy way to find another user online
  - Time delays in transmission

Email

Textual Demands

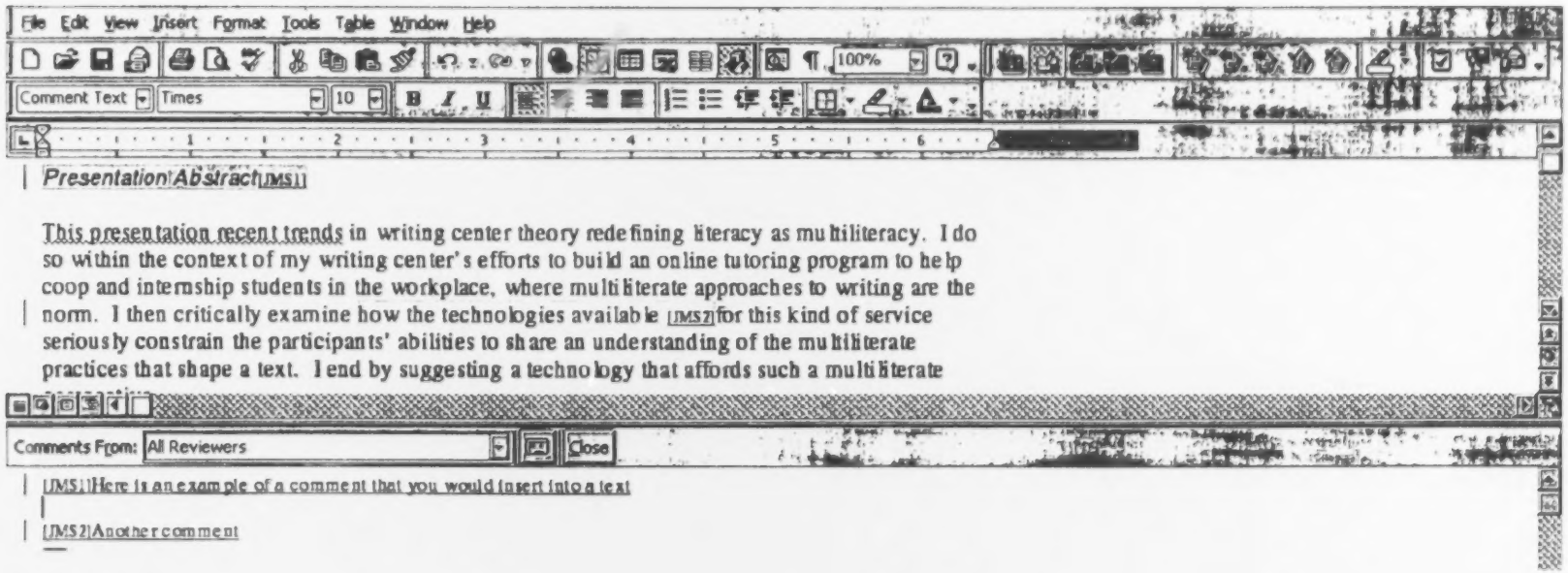
- Pro
  - Near universal exchange of various file types
- Con
  - Unrecognizable file formats
  - Attachments open respective programs - detached from author comments
  - Perspectives on text depend on type of file
  - Virus prone

Email

Shaping a notion of "text"

- texts understandable without direct input from authors
- text is separate from conversation about it
  - opening attachment takes you away from conversation space
  - attachments open in a word processor or similar program
  - texts become objects to be modified and not negotiated

Annotation


File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Window Help
Comment Text
Times
10
100%
Presentation Abstract [MS1]
This presentation recent trends in writing center theory redefining literacy as multiliteracy. I do so within the context of my writing center's efforts to build an online tutoring program to help coop and internship students in the workplace, where multiliterate approaches to writing are the norm. I then critically examine how the technologies available [MS2] for this kind of service seriously constrain the participants' abilities to share an understanding of the multiliterate practices that shape a text. I end by suggesting a technology that affords such a multiliterate
Comments From:
All Reviewers
Close
[MS1] Here is an example of a comment that you would insert into a text
[MS2] Another comment

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Annotation

Used to

- Mark-up a document with revision suggestions
- Edit the wording of a document
- Sustain a conversation "in text" asynchronously

Annotation

Administrative Demands

- Pro
  - Enables more in depth discussion at a distance
  - Embedds conversation in the text to which it refers
- Con
  - Conversation is still asynchrous and time consuming
  - Limited cross-platform compatability

Annotation

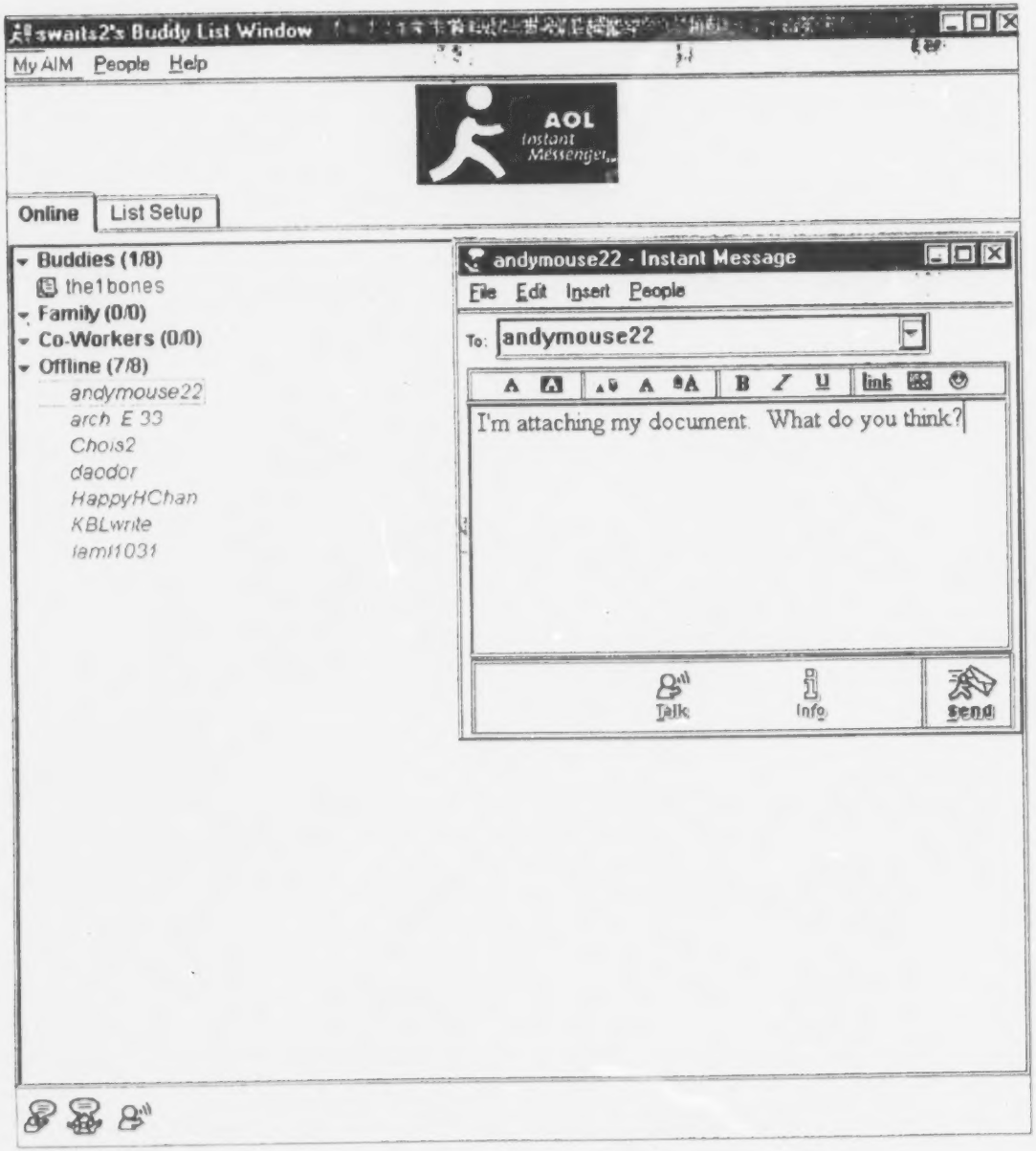
Textual Demands

- Pro
  - Ability to annotate both visual and verbal material
  - Ability to include oral information
  - Can show levels of revision (layered revisions)
- Con
  - Is still an appropriation of the student's text
  - Limits participatory revision
  - Retains only limited history of revisions
  - No glimpse of writing process

Annotation

Shaping a notion of "text"

- Texts can be "corrected" by a disengaged participant
- Composing understood through only a shallow examination of the depth of production
- Texts become better through interpersonal engagement with an audience though it need not be synchronous
- Texts have both visual and verbal elements to which a reviewer must respond



Instant Messenger

Instant Messenger

Used to

- Hold synchronous conversation
- Conduct joint meetings with groups
- Transfer files and discuss them

Instant Messenger

Administrative Demands

- Pro
  - Instantaneous contact is easier
  - Notification system finds other users
  - Alarm alerts users to the system
- Con
  - File size limits and time delays prevent truly "instantaneous" interaction
  - Users must always be logged in and within earshot of computer

Instant Messenger

Textual Demands

- Pro
  - allows exchange of verbal and visual material
  - simultenaeity of conversation allows near "collaborative" revision
- Con
  - text and conversation open in different windows
  - revisions to texts must be resent in order to be shared

Instant Messenger

Shaping a notion of "text"

- Participants can articulate revisions as well as they can demonstrate them
- A text is still something to be modified or corrected
- Completed texts are transfered from one domain of expertise to another
- Conversation about the text is primary

Telnet

Used to

- talk in real time, circumventing company firewalls
- watch revision and editing "in progress"

Telnet

Administrative Demands

- Pro
  - Allows synchronous conversation
  - Improves ability to circumvent technological problems
- Con
  - File sharing is more clumsy (requires separate program)
  - Time consuming - speed of conversation

Telnet

Textual Demands

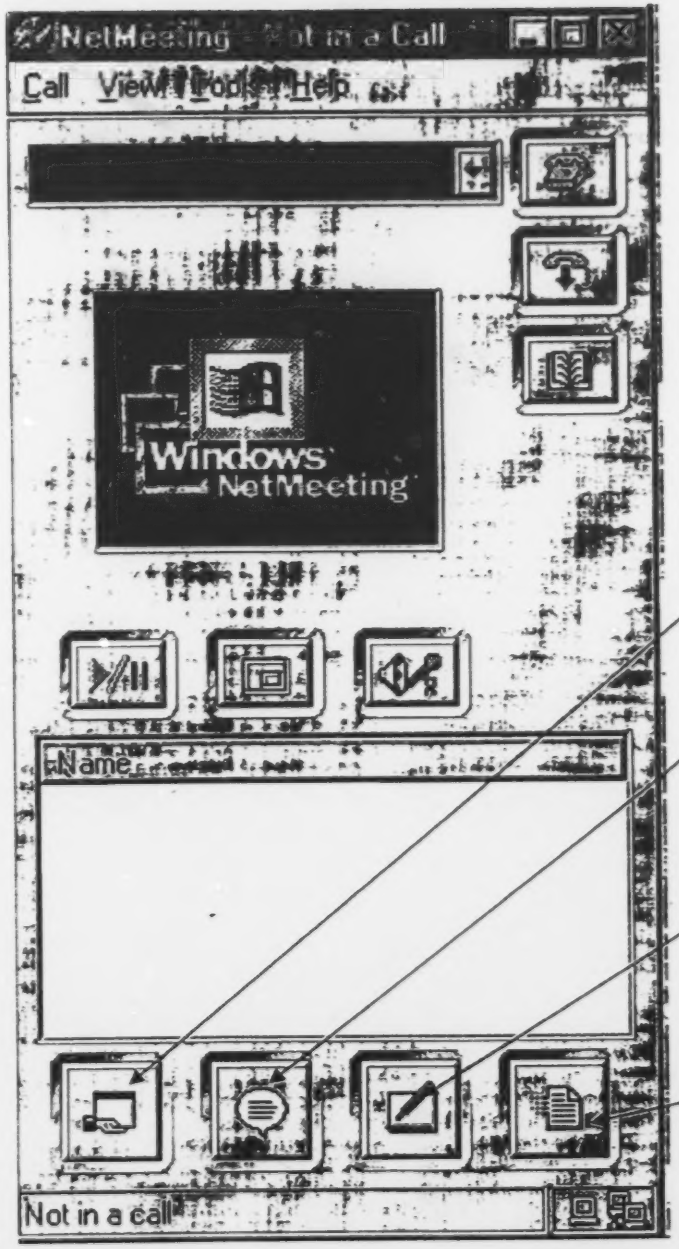
- Pro
  - Enables some "over-the-shoulder" writing and revising
  - Makes some writing tasks more collaborative
- Con
  - Severely limited file sharing capacity
  - No ability to share material other than text
  - No ability to control perspective on text

Telnet

Shaping a notion of "text"

- Not meant for file sharing or writing instruction
- Text is conversation only
- Writing is more clearly seen as a process

NetMeeting



File Sharing

Chat

Shared Whiteboard

File Transfer

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NetMeeting

Used to

- Share a text file
- Hold instantaneous conversation
- Revise collaboratively
- Share applications

NetMeeting

Administrative Demands

- Pro
  - Enables some form of simultaneous contact
  - Ability to share textual, visual, and oral information
- Con
  - Very unstable and buggy system - highly unreliable

NetMeeting

Textual Demands

- Pro
  - Allows sharing of multimodal information
  - Shared perspective on text
  - Application sharing
  - Simultaneous conversation
- Cons
  - Technological bugs

NetMeeting

Shaping a notion of "text"

- Writing is a process contributing to a defined "product"
- Writing is collaborative
- Seeing and sharing a text is important
- A text is part of a conversation

Problems and Solutions

- All technology had some problems
- Solutions depending on tech combinations
  - conference phone + shared files
  - conference phone + web delivery
  - screen capture videos + instant messenger

Recommendations

- NetMeeting Conference to be site of all classroom exchanges
- Establish audio contact with the student to facilitate conversational exchanges
- Make a web site that contains all class material
- Provide some technology that allows students to "preserve" their writing problems as they happen

More Information

For more information on

- class syllabi and curricula
- technologies used

Contact

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